

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q2(a)

What, according to Robert Michels, is the iron law of oligarchy? Do lions folly and foxes in Vilfredo Pareto's theory, essentially differ from each other? Substantiate

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Sociology

Sociology - The Discipline: Modernity and social changes in Europe and emergence of sociology; Scope of the subject and comparison with other social sciences; Sociology and common sense.

Core demand of the question

- What, according to Robert Michels, is the iron law of oligarchy?
- Do lions and foxes in Vilfredo Pareto's theory essentially differ from each other? Substantiate
- Treat both thinkers in one 20-mark answer

Revision summary

Michels held that organisation produces a ruling minority even in democratic socialist parties.

His case was the German Social Democratic Party and its professional apparatus.

Pareto's lions rule by force and persistence. Foxes rule by combination and cunning.

They differ as styles. They do not differ as elites. Circulation replaces one style with the other.

Marx on property and **Weber** on legitimacy remain necessary beside both elite theories.

Introduction

Robert Michels and Vilfredo Pareto both denied that mass organisations stay equal in practice. Michels stated an iron law of oligarchy inside parties. Pareto described a **circulation of elites** between lions and foxes. The two accounts meet on minority rule. They differ on how that minority is composed and replaced.

Body

Michels and the iron law

- In **Political Parties**, Michels argued that organisation itself produces a ruling minority, even in parties that preach democracy and socialism.
- Technical needs create leaders who speak, write, negotiate, and control funds. Members cannot all do this work.
- Psychological needs create a mass that wants direction and a leadership that wants to keep office.
- **The German Social Democratic Party was his main case:** a workers' party that grew a professional apparatus.
- The law is iron in his wording because he treated oligarchy as the fate of organisation, not as a passing abuse.

- **Limits:** unions and parties have later introduced term limits, primaries, and recall. Michels underplayed counter-organisation. He still named a real tendency that Indian cadre parties and trade unions display when offices harden.

Pareto's lions and foxes

- Pareto divided residues. Class I residues favour combination, fraud, and innovation. Class II residues favour persistence, force, and conservation.
- Foxes govern by cunning, deals, and speculation. Lions govern by force, faith, and cohesion.
- Elites circulate. A fox elite that loses the will to use force is replaced by lions. A lion elite that cannot adapt is replaced by foxes.
- They differ in method and residue. They do not differ in being a minority that takes the best of the social surplus.
- They are not two species of human nature frozen forever. Persons and groups can shift, and circulation is the point of the theory.

Do they essentially differ?

- **Yes, as styles of rule:** force versus combination. No, as a class of rulers: both are elites.
- Michels explains why a socialist party still grows a closed leadership. Pareto explains why that leadership, and the wider governing stratum, changes colour without becoming the mass.
- **Marx remains the contrast:** he locates minority rule in property, not only in organisation or residues.
- **Weber's party and status groups sit between them:** organisation plus honour, not only instinct.
- Indian illustrations include the hardening of party high commands, and the swing between coercive and bargain-based elite styles in state politics.

Assessment

- Use Michels for internal party structure. Use Pareto for replacement of elite styles. Do not treat either as a complete theory of class.

Flow diagram

Organisation -> Michels oligarchy
 Michels oligarchy -> Professional leadership
 Pareto elite -> Lions force
 Pareto elite -> Foxes combination
 Lions force -> Circulation
 Foxes combination -> Circulation
 Circulation -> Pareto elite

Conclusion

Michels's iron law is that organisation produces oligarchy, shown in the socialist party that grew a professional leadership. Pareto's lions and foxes differ in residues and methods, not in elite status, and they replace one another through circulation. Together they describe minority rule. They do not replace **Marx** on property or **Weber** on legitimacy.

Facts & figures

Political Parties

Michels's study stating the iron law of oligarchy from the experience of socialist organisation.

German SPD

The workers' party Michels used to show that democratic doctrine did not prevent a leadership caste.

Residues Class I and II

Pareto's combination versus persistence, mapped onto foxes and lions.

Circulation of elites

Pareto's claim that governing minorities replace one another rather than dissolve into the mass.

Oligarchy tendency

Control of funds, speech, and office by a few inside parties and unions, still visible in cadre organisations.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-1/2023/what-according-to-robert-michels-is-the-iron-law-of-oligarchy-do-lions-foxes-in-vilfredo-pareto-theory-essentially-differ-from-each-other-substantiate/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com